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ABSTRACT

This paper expresses dissatisfaction with a system of preparation, certification, supervision, inservice training, and compensation that fails to produce highly qualified teachers. Teachers' training and working conditions must change so that beginning teachers are better prepared, inservice education really improves experienced teachers' skills, and salaries appropriately reflect ability and performance. In short, teachers must become responsible to each other and to the highest professional standards. Teaching is currently not a profession because of the following obstacles: (1) an inadequate knowledge base provided by university departments of education; (2) confusion concerning school mission; (3) insufficient monetary and other rewards; (4) underutilization of experienced teachers as mentors; and (5) inadequate curricula and instructional leadership. To give teachers more professional responsibility, the paper proposes (1) lowering the number of required education courses and raising the number of required academic courses; (2) using master teachers and school administrators to provide public school training; (3) creating special categories of master teachers to plan and conduct staff development activities, develop curricula, and serve as mentors and advisors; (4) basing pay increments on professionally relevant criteria; (5) redefining the principal's instructional leadership role; and (6) placing curriculum development and inservice teacher education in skilled teachers' hands. These proposals might increase overall education costs, but would engender substantial payoffs for teachers and students. A 1986 agenda for the teaching profession is attached. (MLH)

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AGENDA FOR 1986: THE PROFESSION OF TEACHING

Robert R. Spillane

I began my career, as do most educators, as a classroom teacher. Since then I have been a school principal, a Deputy Commissioner for Elementary and Secondary Education in New York State, and a superintendent of schools in several urban and suburban school districts. Over the last twenty-five years I have, in a sense, "seen it all" and in a sense been "part of it all" in American public education. At this point in my career, I am more convinced than ever that, in the recent words of Diane Ravitch, "good teachers must be well-educated, vigorous and imaginative; any reform that aims to impose new standards by decree, without regard to the mind and spirit of teachers, is not likely to succeed." (Educational Excellence Network, October 1985.)

While I have worked, over the years, with many teachers who were well educated, vigorous, and imaginative, I have also worked with many who were not. As an administrator, I have often been frustrated when trying to recruit and retain good teachers and, even more so, when trying to train and motivate mediocre teachers. My frustration has been borne not of disappointment with particular people, but of dissatisfaction with a system of preparation, certification, supervision, inservice training, and compensation which fails to produce highly qualified teachers who can provide the best instruction possible for our students. The problems are inherent in the system, and measures to alleviate them must, therefore, be comprehensive; they must address all aspects of teaching.

We must change the way we train teachers and the circumstances in which they work, so that beginning teachers are better prepared than they are now, inservice education really improves the abilities of experienced teachers, and salaries appropriately reflect teachers' abilities and performance. The term which I and others use to describe this comprehensive series of changes is "professionalization." What it means is making teachers responsible to each other and to the highest standards of the teaching profession for the quality of their teaching.

OBSTACLES

Why is elementary- and secondary-school teaching not currently a profession? Let me cite some of the obstacles.

1. Public school teachers must--by law--be trained in a school or department of education in order to be certified to teach. This policy assumes that education has a "knowledge base," independent of the subject matter to be taught, which must be acquired from professors of education. With almost 30 years of experience and a Ph.D. in education, I am not at all convinced that a foundation of esoteric knowledge exists for pedagogy, as it does, for instance, for law and medicine. In fact, if the average education school entrants were not less academically able than entrants into other colleges and departments--which, unfortunately, they are--they would probably have less tolerance for education courses that are often stultifying and do little to prepare students

for teaching. Worst of all, these meager required courses in education reduce the amount of time an undergraduate preparing for teaching can devote to a substantive general education and to concentrating on the subjects he or she will teach.

2. The confused priorities of teacher preparation reflect what I believe to be an important underlying problem with education today: confusion about the school's mission. Schools today are asked to meet practically every individual and social need, and, too often, teachers do not clearly understand their mission. Is it "social adjustment" or academic learning? Teachers who do not clearly understand the school's mission cannot be in control of their profession, since they do not clearly know what the profession is trying to accomplish. Let me quote Arthur Bestor, in his 1955 book, The Restoration of Learning, to describe my view of the school's mission:

> An indispensable function of education, at every level, is to provide sound training in the fundamental ways of thinking represented by history, science, mathematics, literature, language, art, and the other disciplines evolved in the course of mankind's long quest for usable knowledge, cultural understanding, and intellectual power. To advance moral conduct, responsible citizenship, and social adjustment is, of course, a vital function of education. But, like the other agencies which

> contribute to these ends, the school must work within the context provided by its own characteristic activity. In other words, the particular contribution which the school can make is determined by, and related to, the primary fact that it is an agency of intellectual training.

Teachers must understand and value this fundamental mission of their profession. Greater respect for learning cannot be conveyed to students unless it is first possessed by teachers.

3. Teachers are not adequately rewarded for their work--either monetarily or otherwise. "Otherwise" includes their status in the community, and the encouragement they receive to broaden their knowledge and experience in their academic fields. Neither the monetary nor the "other" rewards adequately encourage teachers to do professional work beyond that required of every teacher, nor does the current monetary reward system differentiate between teaching in academic versus non-academic subject areas. Teachers must wonder when they see other teachers who work in such non-academic areas as driver education receiving the same salary and, perhaps, even more recognition. Adjunct responsibilities such as lunch duty, chaperoning dances, checking bathrooms and hallways--not to mention coaching sports--may be rewarding for many reasons, but they are not "professional."

4. While prospective teachers are inadequately prepared by our current costly methods of "professional preparation" to deal with the actual situations they encounter in their first public school teaching assignments, the resources which <u>could</u> prepare them for these assignments--the experienced teachers already in the schools--are not motivated by school systems to provide this training. Despite all the research to support the effectiveness of peer coaching and mentor teachers, time and money go to university schools and

departments of education rather than to experienced teachers who could really help their inexperienced, but intelligent and well-educated colleagues to deal with the realities of public education.

5. School organization does not encourage administrators to make the quality of instruction their first priority. One of the less-cited sections of the National Commission's report, A Nation at Risk, calls for leadership, as distinct from management, from educational administrators. This means instructional leadership. I am hardly the first to point out that the term "principal" derives from "principal teacher." Principals too seldom consider improvement of instruction their highest priority, and those of us at the federal, state, and school-district levels have been as guilty as anyone in giving the wrong message to school administrators. The message should be: "However important the report, the response to the letter, or the facilities modification, the effectiveness of the instructional program comes first. Your relationship with teachers and your understanding and coordination of the instructional program must be your highest priority, because it is your state's, your school board's, your superintendent's, and--most important--your students' highest priority."

6. The curriculum in our schools is frequently inadequate--either intellectually because it is trivial or confused, or pedagogically because it is unusable by real teachers in real classrooms. This problem results from the so-called "curriculum development process" which includes statewide and districtwide textbook selections and curriculum decisions which often place the satisfaction of all constituencies above the intellectual integrity and vision which a curriculum needs if it is to cohere, command respect, and provide needed flexibility. I have a good model of a curriculum developer: a person rigorously educated in the

discipline in which he or she is developing curriculum (and here I mean academic disciplines such as mathematics, physics, English, and history, rather than educationist "disciplines" such as "curriculum and instruction"), who is able to break down this discipline into its fundamental elements and reassemble them in ways which are both intellectually honest and accessible to students of various abilities at various grade levels. Few and far between as such people may be, they do exist. I have seen them in Boston, New York, and Fairfax County, Virginia. The problem is finding and nurturing such people so that teachers have the best curriculum direction and the best instructional materials possible.

Proposals

Over the past five years, one or another guru or committee has suggested measures to alleviate one or another of these problems. Merit pay, career ladders, educational specialty boards, national teacher testing, educational voucher systems, and increases in starting teachers' salaries are among the suggestions we have heard recently. Any or all of these could be a part of the "professionalization" of teaching, but none of them will result in a comprehensive reform of the profession unless teachers become actively involved in the changes. To give teachers more responsibility for their profession, I would propose the following measures, all of which assume a differentiated reward system:

1. I would lower the number of education courses required for certification and, concomitantly, raise the number of required courses in the academic disciplines. Every prospective teacher should take a balanced range of academic courses outside of departments or schools of education and complete a major in one such subject; for secondary teachers, this should be the subject they will teach. The required

courses in "education" should be limited to one or two full-year courses, which should be carefully planned and taught to prepare prospective teachers for internships.

Well-educated people who have not taken such courses should be permitted to meet the education course requirements through such alternative means as an examination and/or paid internship.

2. Pedagogical training of prospective teachers beyond the one or two college courses should occur in public schools, where recognized master teachers and administrators would "show the ropes" to the teachers who have been broadly educated in their undergraduate years. These mentors would be carefully selected and paid for their mentorship, perhaps with money saved from education courses which would no longer be required.

3. Special categories of "master teachers" would be created to plan and conduct staff development activities, act as mentors for beginning teachers, develop curriculum, and advise principals and other administrators on instructional matters. They would receive not only extra pay performing special assignments, but also professional responsibilities and recognition commensurate with their outstanding abilities. Selection of master teachers would have to be in the hands of the profession--not the teacher unions or associations or the school boards, but the teachers who set and maintain standards for their profession, including the intellectual standards of instruction in each academic discipline. Albert Shanker's "Professional Teacher Board" (American Education, Fall 1985) and Lieberman's "Educational Specialty Boards" (Kappan, October 1985) are promising proposals along these lines, but we need more thinking about the method for selecting master teachers, since these teachers would, in fact, define and maintain the standards of

the teaching profession as I envision it.

4. Increments on teachers' pay scales would depend, not on the mere number of course credits regardless of what those courses were, but on professionally relevant criteria such as coursework in pertinent academic disciplines, completion of inservice courses which focus on implementing specific curricula or improving classroom instructional skills, and evaluation of professional growth by master teachers and by principal-teachers.

5. The role of the principal--the person who is in charge of the individual school--would be redefined away from the "management model" and toward the "principal-teacher" model. Eventually, principal-teachers would be trained by master administrators and certified by methods similar to those for master teachers. While the principal-teacher would continue to be responsible to the superintendent for all aspects of school operation, supervising and improving the quality of instruction would be the principal's highest priority. Relationships between principals and teachers would be more collegial and mutually-supportive because they would be depending upon one another's expertise to achieve a common goal. The principal's credibility as an evaluator would be enhanced, thereby addressing a fundamental flaw in career ladders and merit pay plans whose success or failure depends ultimately on teacher confidence in the evaluation system.

6. Curriculum development and inservice training would be in the hands of skilled teachers. Typically, these would be master teachers with doctorates in their subject areas and with teaching experience at the appropriate grade levels. Such people would be responsible for curriculum development at both state and local levels, and for training teachers to implement the curricula they develop. They would have a collegial working relationship with college professors in their disciplines and those professors, in turn, would help

with curriculum development. Curriculum developers on the staffs of school districts and state education departments would also help in order to uphold the integrity of instruction in the various disciplines. Eventually, this kind of curriculum development should drive textbook selection and textbook development, rather than the other way around as is common today.

7. Master teachers with special expertise in dealing with particular problems will advise administrators and policy-making bodies on those areas. In particular, the problem of educating inner-city adolescents should be one of our highest state and national priorities, and its solution requires the best advice available from those teachers who are successfully dealing with it.

The several suggestions I have made in this paper are not discrete from one another; they are held together by the overall plan to professionalize teaching. Obviously, this can not be done overnight, or, perhaps, even in five years, but it <u>can</u> be done successfully if it is done comprehensively rather than in a piecemeal fashion. This means, for instance, that education course requirements should not be reduced without developing mentored internships, that mentors should not be selected without developing a master-teacher program, that master teachers should not be selected without establishing an independent selection mechanism which has integrity and credibility, that principals' priorities should not be changed without providing them with the background they will need for their new role, that salary increments should not be changed unless adequate mechanisms for evaluating the new criteria are in place.

How much more money would have to be spent on schooling to implement my proposals, I do not know. There are trade-offs--for instance, between the cost of education courses and the cost of internships--but I expect that implementing the proposals would

increase the overall cost of education. The payoffs, however, would be substantial: talented teachers with high aspirations for themselves and their students, teachers satisfied with their work and their profession, students learning from committed and well-prepared teachers, vastly increased status for education as a profession, and a national commitment to excellent schools.

Much of what I have described here is within the power of governors and legislators to effect, if they can marshal the support of teachers, school boards, parents, and--most important--the citizens of our states and nation who understand the benefits of better education but who have long since given up on our educational system. Reform, however, must ultimately come from within the profession itself, and it must come now--in 1986.

The National Governor's Association has a timely opportunity to put forward a comprehensive plan that all our constituencies can support because it will strengthen our educational system and our nation without taking the final responsibility for reform away from the profession. The educational reports of the past two years, the efforts and experiences of individual states, and the preliminary findings of recent studies clearly give us our agenda for 1986.

AGENDA FOR 1986

THE PROFESSION OF TEACHING

Whatever variations may exist in our local efforts to improve the profession of teaching, our agenda for 1986 must include these common denominators which have consistently emerged from both research and experience:

1. **Teacher preparation programs** that decrease the requirement for undergraduate education courses and increase reliance on internships, mentor teacher programs, or other practical training experiences for prospective teachers. This preparation could readily be acquired by others who have a major in an academic discipline and who pass a teacher certification exam. State credentialing requirements would have to be significantly revamped to achieve the following benefits:

   - o a more rigorous academic standard for those entering the teaching profession
   - o greater flexibility to certify potential teachers from other disciplines and professions, and to thereby alleviate the serious shortage of teachers
   - o increased professional leadership responsibilities for highly-qualified, experienced teachers
   - o a practical application of the peer-teaching model whose effectiveness is well-documented.

2. **Differentiated pay plans** based on credible evaluation systems and designed to serve educational as well as administrative purposes. If the purpose of a plan is merely to rate teachers in order to determine their pay scale, then money is the primary incentive and divisiveness the inevitable result. The teaching force is divided into the "haves" and the "have-nots" by merit pay plans intended to serve as reward systems for a select few. Professional satisfaction is likely to be found only among the small percentage of "haves."

   A differentiated pay plan with an educational as well as administrative purpose will result not only in higher pay, but also in greater professional responsibilities for selected teachers. The plan thereby becomes a way to identify and recognize the talented teachers needed to work with their peers in educationally productive endeavors as mentor teachers, colleague teachers, curriculum developers, or staff trainers.

3. **Professional rewards,** both extrinsic and intrinsic, that recognize the potentially stultifying isolation of teachers from their peers, the energizing effect of collegial interaction, and the importance of professional pride. The routine conditions of teaching contribute little to professionalism, but they are amenable to changes that would provide greater job satisfaction and help to retain good teachers.

4. **Professional development programs** that maintain the classroom effectiveness of experienced teachers by ensuring continued professional competence and currency, and by stimulating individual growth and achievement. Teachers should be among the planners, designers, and implementers of staff development activities that truly provide them with the knowledge and skills to meet the highest standards of teaching.